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The Bible Study Union Lessons

THE COMPLETELY GRADED SERIES

Witnesses for Christ

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What It Meant to be a Christian In the Early Centuries

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

597-599 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK

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The Bible Study Union Lessons (Completely Graded Series), Junior Grade: Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York; price 12 cents each.

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THE LAST TOKEN
From a painting by Gabriel Max

Witnesses for Christ

WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN THE EARLY CENTURIES

A Course of Study for Classes of Boys and Girls Twelve to Fifteen Years Old

By HAROLD B. HUNTING

Charles F. Kent, Ph.D.
George A. Coe, Ph.D., LL.D. } *Consulting Editors*

New York
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1913

INTRODUCTION

TO THE PUPIL

In the last thirty-six lessons of the JUNIOR BIBLE, we have followed the story of the disciples of Jesus down to about the year 100 A.D. The later writings of the New Testament introduced us to the beginning of one of the most thrilling chapters in the world's history, the life and death struggle between the religion of Jesus and the heathenism of the Roman empire. If we had stopped there in our study we would not have known the trials which men and women had to endure to be Christians in those early days. In the following pages, therefore, we shall take up the story where the New Testament lets it drop. We shall try to gain a vivid mental picture of the life of the Christians in the second, third and fourth centuries And we shall find that this great period, from beginning to end, is a story of marvelous Christian loyalty and heroism.

Most of our information regarding this history comes from the Christian writers of those days, who are generally referred to as "the Fathers." They wrote explaining Christianity and its teachings and beliefs for the purpose of defending it against the false statements of heathen enemies. These books defending Christianity are usually referred to as "apologies." The Greek word "apologia," however, did not mean an "apology" in our sense of the word but rather a "defense."

On page 62 you will find a list of the early Christian writers referred to in these lessons.

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Witnesses for Christ

LESSON I.

WHY CHRISTIANS WERE PERSECUTED IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

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§1. Wicked Customs Among the Romans.

The ancient world, in the time of the Roman Empire, was in many ways extremely corrupt, heartless, and cruel. There were many persons indeed, who tried to live righteous lives; but even the best of them thought nothing of many customs which would be considered shocking and wicked, nowadays. It is hard to believe, for example, that civilized men and women could take delight in watching the death agonies of their fellow-men. Yet the great Coliseum at Rome, and the amphitheatres in all the leading cities, were continually thronged with spectators. Here, protected from the sun with awnings, and decked out in splendid robes and glittering jewels, the fashionable men and women of each city looked down from their perfumed cushioned seats, into the arena, where condemned criminals were torn by leopards, or tigers or lions, or wild boars; or where perchance trained gladiators fell upon one another in mortal combat. These cruel and terrible exhibitions were what the people of those days called amusements.

§2. The Unpopularity of the Christians.

Into the midst of these evil practices came the Christians, with their purer and better way of living. They refused to go to these "amusements" at the amphitheatres. They refused to share in the degrading vices which were commonly practised. As a result they were unpopular. This unpopularity was greatly increased among those who found that they were losing money because of the new religion. Idol makers, for example, and priests in heathen temples hated the Christians, because each new convert to Christianity meant so much less revenue for them. There were many persons moreover, who were

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influenced against Christianity through misunderstandings and falsehoods. The Christians were called atheists, because they would not worship idols. They were even accused of all kinds of horrible deeds. It was reported that little children were killed and eaten at their meetings. Although these statements were absolutely false they were believed by many intelligent men.

§ 3. The Christians and the Roman Government.

The Roman government permitted its subjects for the most part to worship whatever gods they pleased. In Rome itself all sorts of foreign religions flourished. One thing only was insisted on: whatever special deity a man might choose to worship, he must also sacrifice to the old Roman gods, who were supposed to protect the Roman Empire. Furthermore, all Roman subjects were required to offer sacrifice, on certain occasions, before the image of the emperor. These laws were readily obeyed, by all except the Christians; they alone held aloof and refused even to throw a pinch of incense on the altar in worship of Cæsar. To the Roman officials, this seemed like treason against the government. Furthermore the Christians, as we know, did really believe that Christ was soon to return, and that He would overthrow the Roman Empire and all earthly kingdoms, and establish His own heavenly kingdom. When the Roman rulers heard about this belief, it was natural for them to suspect that the Christians were actually plotting against the government.

§ 4. Laws Against the Christians.

So from the time of Nero, Christianity seems to have been a "forbidden religion" in the eyes of the law. The Emperor Trajan, more wise and just than some rulers, gave orders that the Christians were not to be sought out, but that when accused and convicted, they were to be compelled to sacrifice to the gods or else were to be put to death. Under this rule (about 110 A.D.), a Christian was left unmolested, unless some enemy reported him to the local governor or prefect. They had many enemies, however, and from time to time fierce attacks were

INTERIOR VIEW OF THE COLISEUM

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made upon them. At no time, and under no circumstances, could they feel secure. Many of them were cruelly tortured and slain. They were torn with iron claws, hung upon crosses, thrown to wild beasts, covered with skins of beasts and torn by dogs, roasted over slow fires. No form of torture was neglected which ingenuity could devise.

§ 5. The Failure of these Laws to Check the Growth of Christianity.

In spite of these attacks the number of the Christians increased at a remarkable rate. Christianity appealed not merely to the educated but to the humble and lowly. The Christians were noted for their kindness to the sick and to the poor. Their Gospel aroused the consciences of men and offered them forgiveness and a Saviour from sin. One of the most powerful influences in the winning of new converts was the courage and constancy of the Christians themselves in the face of persecution; and their willingness to die, if need be, for their faith. Thus for every Christian put to death, many more converts would often be won.

The impression made on heathen spectators by the death of the Christians is well brought out by the following description from "Quo Vadis" of a scene in the arena during the persecution by Nero.* "The turn of the Christians was at hand. Since that was a new spectacle for people, and no one knew how the Christians would bear themselves, all waited with a certain curiosity. The disposition of the audience was attentive but unfriendly. Those people who were to appear had burned Rome and its ancient treasures. They had drunk the blood of infants, and poisoned water; they had cursed the whole human race, and had committed the vilest crimes. The harshest punishment did not suffice for their hatred; and if any fear possessed people's hearts it was this: that the torture of the Christians would not equal the guilt of these ominous criminals.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Now the prefect gave a sign. The same old man appeared

*Quoted from "Quo Vadis" by permission of Little, Brown, and Company. Copyright 1896, 1897, by Jeremiah Curtin.

who had called the gladiators to death, and passing with slow step across the arena amid silence, he struck three times again on the door.

"Throughout the amphitheatre was heard the deep murmur—

" 'The Christians! the Christians!'

"The iron gratings creaked; through the dark openings were heard the usual cries of the scourgers, 'To the sand ' and in one moment the arena was filled with crowds of people covered with skins of beasts. All ran quickly and reaching the middle of the circle, they knelt one by another with raised hands. The spectators judging this to be a prayer for pity, and enraged by such cowardice, began to stamp, whistle, throw empty wine vessels, bones from which the flesh had been eaten, and shout, 'The beasts! the beasts!' But all at once something unexpected took place. From out the shaggy assembly singing voices were raised, and then sounded that hymn, heard for the first time in a Roman amphitheatre, 'Christus regnat' ('Christ reigns '). Astonishment seized the spectators. They saw faces pale, but as it were inspired. All understood that those people were not asking for mercy, and that they seemed not to see the circus, the audience, the senate, or Cæsar. 'Christus regnat' rose ever louder, and in the seats far up to the highest, among the rows of spectators, more than one asked himself the question, 'What is happening, and who is that Christus who reigns in the mouths of those people who are about to die.' "

§ 6. Final Attempts to Stamp out Christianity, and Their Failure.

Before the time of Decius (250 A.D.) no systematic attempt was made by the government to search out the Christians. During the reign of this emperor, however, there were many great public calamities, as for example, a widespread pestilence. "The Christians have brought these things on us," people said, "by their neglect of the gods." So Decius issued an edict, which was really a declaration of war against the new religion. Christians were now hunted down like murderers all over the empire. About fifty years later (303 A.D.), after a temporary

respite, the Emperor Diocletian undertook to carry out the same kind of campaign, with even greater energy. By that time the Christians had begun to have church buildings. These were destroyed. All copies of the New Testament that could be secured were burned. Pastors and church officers were punished with special cruelty. It was a terrible experience for the Christians, but the majority of them proved true. In fact many who had been lukewarm in their loyalty were awakened to heroism. New converts flocked to the standard of the cross. It is said that a certain actor had been hired to take part in a play which ridiculed and slandered Christianity. He knew these statements were false, however, and when the time came for him to repeat them on the stage, his better nature triumphed. Instead of going on with his part he came to the front of the stage and declared his belief in Christianity and his purpose to be a Christian. He was immediately seized and put to death. As time went on the Roman authorities began to realize that it was impossible to destroy a religion which could awaken so dauntless a spirit as this. The persecution of Diocletian was the last of the great Roman persecutions.

Questions and Topics.

1. Do you think the pagan Romans were naturally worse people than we are to-day?

2. If you had lived in those days, would you have gone to the shows held in the amphitheatre? Why?

3. What things do we do now which Christians living one thousand years from now will consider wrong and wicked?

4. Why were the Romans offended at the Christians for not taking part in the vices of those days?

5. Would you have believed the stories about the Christians? If not, how would you have found out the truth?

Questions to Sum Up.

1. Mention three reasons why the Christians were unpopular.

2. Mention two reasons why the Roman officials passed laws against them.

3. What was the ruling of the Emperor Trajan, regarding the Christians?

4. What effect did these laws have?

5. Under what two emperors was there a systematic attempt to root out Christianity?

LESSON 2.

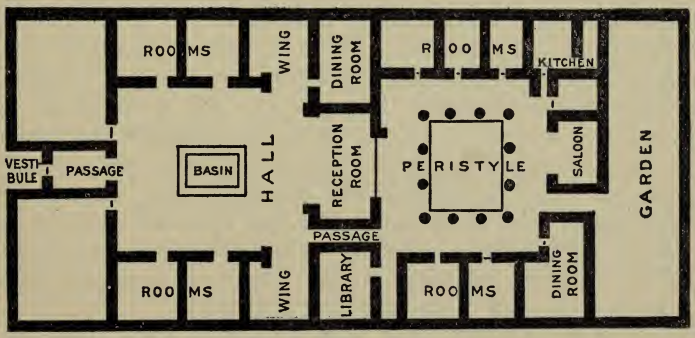
AN INVITATION TO A SUPPER.

§ 1. The Spirit of Brotherhood Among the Early Christians.

The heathen writer Lucian said of the Christians "Their master has persuaded them that they are all brothers." In this lesson, let us try to get a vivid idea of what this Christian brotherhood meant, and especially what it would mean to a poor man. Let us imagine for example, a poor bricklayer, who has been living in a village in northern Italy. Suppose we call him Lycidas.

§ 2. A Poor Bricklayer, Out of Work, Homeless and Hungry.

This man, Lycidas, let us say, belonged to a little band of Christians in his native village, who had been converted by a traveling missionary. One summer the crops were very poor. People had no money to build houses, and Lycidas could find no work. So he decided to come to Rome. The missionary, on one of his visits, gave him a letter to a member of the church in Rome who would help him to find work. When he reached



Plan of Roman House.

the great city, however, and went to the house to which he had been directed by the missionary, he found that the man had moved. With a sinking heart, he set out alone, to look for a

job. First he found a cheap lodging, a small, dirty room, in a three-story tenement house. Then he began to walk the streets inquiring for opportunities to work at his trade. Days passed, however, and he could find no work of any kind. It is not pleasant to find oneself alone in a great city, with no friends and with little money. Lycidas grew pale and haggard. Finally his money was all spent, and his landlord put him out of his room on the street, a helpless, homeless beggar. Winter was coming on, and there are some cold winter days even in sunny Italy.

§ 3. A Secret Countersign. A Joyful Discovery.

Lycidas though sad and discouraged did not give up his weary search for work. That afternoon, as he passed by a certain house, he noticed above the door a small drawing of a fish. His heart was filled with joy and hope. For among the early Christians a picture of a fish was used as a secret countersign. The letters in the Greek word for fish formed the initials of the words meaning "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour." Was this perhaps a house where Christians lived? Lycidas decided to knock, and a kind-faced woman opened the door. "I noticed the carving over your door," said Lycidas, "I, too am one of the brothers." The woman hesitated; for there were spies who made it their business to search out Christians and betray them. "I came from northern Italy," continued Lycidas. "I have a letter from the missionary Linus to a Christian here named Clement. But when I went to his house, I found he had moved." At this the woman clapped her hands with joy. "Clement has told us about you," she said, stretching out her hand to welcome the stranger. "He himself received a letter from Linus about you, and he asked us all to be on the lookout for you. We are so sorry that you have been alone in the city all these weeks. Isn't it fortunate that you noticed the sign of the fish over our door."

§ 4. A Church Supper; the Love Feast of the Early Christians.

So Lycidas at last found himself among friends. What did it mean to him? Perhaps we can best find out by going with

him to the weekly church supper to which the kind-faced woman invited him. Let us suppose that it is held that very evening. Lycidas does not hesitate to accept the invitation, for in spite of the bread and milk which the good woman has already given him, he is still ravenously hungry. Suppose then, that we go with him, as the hour approaches. We open the door and an eager welcome awaits us. "Here are our new members," some one cries, and we receive a cordial hand clasp from every one in the house. A fire is burning in an open fire-pan called a brazier, and the room is warm. A table is spread in the large central hall, and we take our places around it. Here are rolls and honey, roast mutton, beans, cheese, dates and figs. Each family has brought what it could, and all has been put together in a common stock. How good that mutton tastes to Lycidas, who really has not had enough to eat since he came to Rome. Here are, perhaps, two dozen people, men, women and children. Here are laborers, like Lycidas. Here are slaves. Over there is a Jewish merchant. Yonder is a teacher of rhetoric. "In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free." There are some, perhaps, whose manners are rude. They are new converts and have not yet learned the ways of the Christians. It is a merry company. Jests are passed back and forth. One member has brought a lyre and plays and sings. Among those present is Clement, for whom Lycidas rece ved the letter from the missionary. He is a foreman in charge of the construction of a new aqueduct near Rome. He promises Lycidas work and tells him to bring his trowel and commence laying bricks the very next day.

§ 5. The Lord's Supper.

At the close of the supper, the president of the church rises in his place and stands by the table. Before him is a plate of bread and a cup of wine. A silence falls upon the company. Even the voices of the children are hushed.

"Fellow-believers," he says, "this bread and this wine symbolize the presence with us of our Lord Jesus. Our pleasant fellowship with each other should make us the more conscious of Him. For wherever Christians sit down to eat together in

the spirit of mutual love, their table is the Lord's table, and their unseen Lord is present with them." After a brief but earnest prayer, the bread is passed around, and then the wine, each one taking a small portion. Then they all rise from the table, and sing a hymn, and are dismissed. Lycidas goes no doubt with Clement.

§ 6. What Brotherhood Meant to the Christians of Those Days.

Thus we see that Christian brotherhood meant food to the hungry. It meant the chance to work and earn one's own bread. It meant the pleasure which comes from being with other people, and realizing their love. It meant danger and sometimes death. Finally, however, and best of all, it meant fellowship with God. For it is chiefly through the brotherly love of men, that we come to realize the fatherly love of God.

Questions and Topics.

1. Even though Lycidas could not furnish any of the food for the supper, in what way could he show a brotherly spirit on that occasion?

2. If Lycidas had died, some years later, leaving a wife and little children with little or no money, how would the Christians have shown their brotherhood?

3. Suppose some member of the church had been lazy, and had made no attempt to find work. Do you think the Christians would have supported him in idleness?

4. Compare this story of Lycidas with Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan. Which illustrates the more nobly the spirit of brotherhood? Explain.

5. How may we show the brotherly spirit to-day?

To Sum Up.

1. How did Lycidas discover the house where a Christian family lived?

2. Why did the Christians use the picture or carving of a fish as an emblem of their religion?

3. How did the Christians provide the food for their church suppers?

4. What religious ceremony was observed on these occasions?

5. What benefits did Christian brotherhood bring to the members of the early Christian churches?

LESSON 3.

AN AGE WHEN IT WAS DANGEROUS TO GO TO CHURCH.

§1. Going to Church Nineteen Centuries Ago.

Going to church is not generally considered an exciting experience in these days. There was a time, however, in the history of Christianity, when being present at church worship was an adventure which might end in death. Suppose we attend, in imagination, one of the Sunday services of the early Christians at Rome. Here is a Christian mother gently awakening her twelve-year-old son, long before daylight, on Sunday morning. Her husband is not a Christian and her boy is going to the service with her. There were many such mothers with their sons at the meetings of the Christians. Swiftly and silently they dress and steal out into the dark, narrow street. Some of the larger avenues in the city are lighted, and carts have been moving to and fro all night. These two, however, make their way through the side streets, lest they should be recognized. It is necessary for them to be very cautious for some suspicious official might trace them to the house where the meeting is to be held, and then not only they but all the other Christians present might be arrested. "Hark! is that some one following us?" The mother seizes her boy's arm and draws him back into the dark shadows of an overhanging doorway. The steps draw nearer; the man does not stop, however, as he passes them. Whoever he is, he goes on down the street.

§ 2. Where the Christians Held Their Meetings.

Soon they reach the house where the meeting is to be held. It is not a regular church building, like ours, but a private house where one of the Christians lives. Perhaps it is the house where we saw the supper in our last lesson. At the door the mother knocks three times. It is opened, but only a few inches. "Peace be with you," says the mother. "Peace be with whom?" says a voice within. "The faithful," answers the mother. Then they are admitted. "Have they all come?" says the mother, as she looks around the circle. "Where is Glaucus?

Oh, here he is! Where is Miriam?" "She is sick," some one answers. All the members, then, are accounted for. The first part of the adventure is over. All who are coming to the meeting have safely reached the house. The service may now begin. We will be interested in watching it.

§ 3. An Ancient Christian Gathering.

We see that there are perhaps twenty or thirty people gathered in a semi-circle around a table on which are a lamp and several rolls of papyrus. The room is crowded. Some are sitting on the floor. Others are standing in the rear. The shadows from the flickering lamp flit weirdly across their faces. Some of those present are not yet Christians, but are sincerely interested in the new religion and have been brought to the meeting by their friends. One of the older men steps to the table and reads a passage from one of the rolls, which is a copy of the Book of Isaiah. He reads the passage about the Servant of Jehovah, who was despised and rejected of men. Then he takes another roll, and reads a selection from the Gospels, or from one of the Epistles of Paul. Then another man rises and preaches a short sermon. Even in the dim light, we can see his eyes flash, as he warns his hearers to beware of the evils which are practised by their heathen neighbors, and tells them of a power from on high which can guide and strengthen them. In the course of his sermon, he may very likely have spoken words like the following which are quoted from the Epistle to Diognetus, Chapter 10, written about 150 A.D.

§ 4. Extract from an Ancient Christian Sermon.

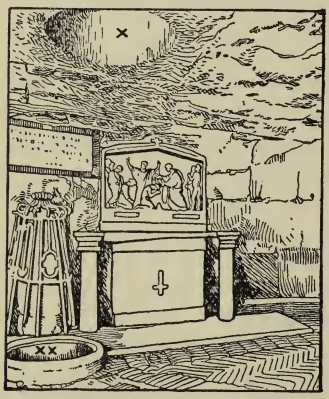
"Do not be surprised that a man may become an imitator of God. He can, if he is willing. For it is not by ruling over his neighbors, or by seeking to hold the supremacy over those who are weaker, or by being rich and showing violence toward those who are inferior, that happiness is found; nor can any one by these things become an imitator of God. But these things do not at all constitute God's majesty. On the contrary, he who takes upon himself the burden of his neighbor, he who, in whatever respect he may be superior, is ready to benefit another

who is deficient; he who distributes to the needy whatever things he has received from God, and thus becomes a god to those who receive,—he is an imitator of God."

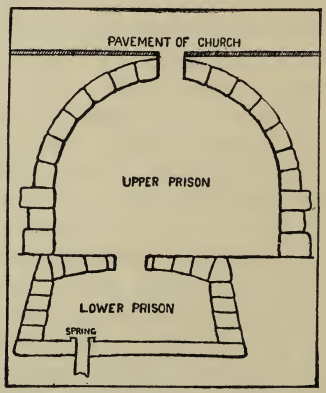
After the sermon several persons pray. Perhaps the bread and wine are again passed around, "in memory of the Lord." A collection is taken up to buy food and medicine for sick Miriam. Then they rise and sing a hymn,—one of the "Psalms of David."

§ 5. An Interrupted Hymn.

But, hark, what is that noise at the door? The worshipers do not hear it at first, because of the sound of their voices in the



Interior of the Mamertine Prison.



Plan of the Mamertine Prison.

The Mamertine prison was below ground, and its lowest dungeon could be entered only through a hole in the floor of the upper chamber (X in cut) through which prisoners were let down. The tradition is that both Paul and Peter were confined there, and that the spring of water now there (XX in cut) was miraculously produced by Peter so that he might baptize converts made in the prison. The event is commemorated in the bas-relief over the altar. This dungeon is 19 feet long by 10 feet wide and 6 1-2 high. Here prisoners were left to perish. Sometimes they were chained to the stone post with iron bars about it to the left of the altar. This horrible dungeon is now entered by stairs from the outside.

hymn. Suddenly there is a crash, as the door is forced open and the soldiers from the prefect rush in. That *was* a spy, then, who followed the mother and her son. He was shadowing them just as she feared, and when they went into the house, he sent in haste for the soldiers. Heavy hands are laid upon trembling, unresisting forms. The whole company, men, women,

DIANA OR CHRIST

From a painting by Edwin Long

and children, are hurried off to prison. The interrupted music of the psalm is continued and finished in the darkness of a dungeon.

Some days later, as the little band was led out into the arena to be put to death in cruel ways, certain of the heathen soldiers noticed the look of peace and happiness upon all their faces. They were not like ordinary criminals, going with cringing steps to the place of execution. They walked like princes and princesses on the way to a coronation. The heathen onlookers could but wonder at it. They did not know that in the hearts of these Christians still was ringing the music of that interrupted hymn; "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *Thou* art with me."

Questions and Topics.

1. Why did the Christians hold their meetings before daylight?

2. Compare the meeting described in the lesson with some meeting which you have attended in one of our modern churches. Mention the similarities and the differences.

3. Why were the Christians willing to risk their lives, rather than be absent from any of these meetings?

4. What part of the meeting would you have liked best?

5. How may a person get as much help as possible from a church service?

To Sum Up.

1. In what buildings did the early Christians hold their services for worship?

2. On what day of the week did they meet?

3. At what time of the day?

4. What took place at these meetings?

5. Why was it dangerous to go to them?

LESSON 4.

HOW A ROBBER CAPTAIN WAS CONVERTED.

§1. The Good News of God's Forgiveness.

When Jesus was preaching in Galilee and Judea, one of the most important parts of His work was to proclaim to sinners the Heavenly Father's eagerness to forgive. Jesus also requested His followers to preach this same Gospel, or Good News, and thus win sinners to repentance. Were the later Christians true to this purpose of Jesus? We may answer the question in part by the following incident which is told by Clement of Alexandria.

§ 2. A Christian Teacher and His Boy Friend.

In the city of Smyrna there lived a promising young lad: handsome, athletic, quick witted. Suppose we call him Lucretius. One day he went with friends to a meeting of the Christians. Among the Christian teachers, there was a man named John. Clement says that it was John the Apostle but it was probably some other John. At any rate, whoever he was, the boy and the man became good friends, and the boy never forgot the older man's warm, hearty handclasp and kindly eyes. Through John's influence he became a Christian; and after being instructed in the Christian life was baptized and received into the church.

§ 3. A Lad Who Fell in with Bad Companions.

Shortly after this, unfortunately, John was compelled to leave Smyrna for several years. Before he went away he asked the pastor of the church to watch over Lucretius with special care. "For my sake," he said, "be a good friend to him. Give him help and counsel and encouragement." This pastor, however, was not so earnest a Christian as John, and he forgot about Lucretius; and as time went on the boy fell in with idle companions of his own age, and began to yield to their influence. First they took him to heathen entertainments, and gradually led him deeper and deeper into wrongdoing. Finally, one night while he was with them, they killed and robbed a wealthy traveler, on a lonely road. Thus he felt that his hands were stained with blood, and as Clement says, "he now entirely despaired of salvation, and from the greatness of his nature, having gone aside from the right path, he took the bit between his teeth, like a hard-mouthed and powerful horse, and rushed with all the more force into the depths." He organized his companions into a regular band of robbers. He himself became their captain, and was known as the fiercest, cruelest, and bloodiest of them all.

§ 4. Going to Seek the Wanderers.

Years passed, and John came back to Smyrna. He was an old man now. He had not forgotten about Lucretius, however,

but very soon after his arrival inquired of the pastor regarding him. The pastor could not but hang his head in grief and shame. "He is dead," said he, "not dead in body, but dead to God. For he turned to wickedness, and became a robber, and even now he and his robber band have taken possession of that mountain yonder in front of the city. No one dares to go along the road by that mountain any more." Of course John was shocked and indignant. If he himself could only have stayed in Smyrna, he knew that the boy would not have gone astray. "It was a fine guard I left," he said, "over a brother's soul. But bring a horse, and find some one to guide me to that mountain." "No, no," cried the pastor, "you must not go there. You are an old man, and those bandits are desperate." But John insisted; so the pastor finally brought a horse and the old man climbed into the saddle. Let us hope that the pastor was brave enough to go along himself, to act as guide.

§ 5. Visiting a Camp of Bandits.

About halfway up the mountain, one of the robbers, who was stationed there as an outpost, came rushing, sword in hand, and seized the bridle of John's horse. "Take me to your captain," said John. So in a little while they reached the rough board shanty at the summit of the mountain, where Lucretius was carousing with his men. His handsome face was hard and cruel, and he wore a dagger in his belt. "Ah ha," he shouted, as John was brought into the dirty, disorderly room, "another prisoner for ransom." But just then he looked into the prisoner's face, and in spite of the gray hairs, and other changes, recognized his friend; and he stood with downcast eyes. "You fellows get out of here," he said; "I want to talk to this man alone"; and they knew very well that it would be dangerous to disobey. "My dear son," said John, "I have come to bring you back to your Heavenly Father's love." But Lucretius would not even allow him to touch his hand. "I am not worthy that you should touch me," he said. The brave old man would not be rebuffed, however, and kept on pleading with him with tender and thrilling words. "Believe me, my boy, Christ has sent me for you. For you I would gladly lay down my life,

even as the Lord endured death for us all. It is not too late for you to begin again to live the Christian life. Come." And strange and wonderful as it may seem, Lucretius yielded to John's pleadings, and with many of his followers turned once and for all from his former evil life and became again a true and loyal Christian.

§ 6. A Christian Slave Girl Who Converted Her Mistress.

This incident was but a single example of the constant efforts of the Christians to bring to sinners the good news of God's forgiving love. "Pray without ceasing," wrote Ignatius, "on behalf of other men, that they may repent and find God. See that they be taught by your deeds, if in no other way. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us show ourselves their brothers in all true kindness." This was the spirit of the Christians. Wherever a Christian went, his life was an influence for good among his heathen neighbors. Here for example is a Christian slave girl. "How is it, girl," says her mistress one day, "that you never steal from me, as other slaves do?" "I used to do those things," she answers. "But now I have an unseen Master, who is holy and good. It would grieve Him, if I should steal." "What talk is this, girl?" says the mistress. "Who is this unseen Master of yours?" Then the maid tells her of this new religion of Jesus; how this wonderful person Jesus lived in the land of the Jews; how He had held up before His followers the ideal of being honest, pure, and unselfish, as children of the holy and loving God; and finally, how He died on the cross to save men from their sins. The mistress is impressed by her maid-servant's words; for her own life has been selfish. Her conscience gives her no rest. "You should come to our meeting to-night, mistress," the girl finally adds. "You should listen to our teacher; he can explain these things far better than I." So perchance it comes to pass that the mistress goes to the meeting of the Christians with her maid-servant and is converted.

§ 7. The Testimony of a Heathen Writer.

The heathen writer Celsus supposed that he was reproaching the Christians when he said of them: "Every one who is a sinner, every one who is devoid of understanding, and every one who is in any way unfortunate, him will the Christians receive into the kingdom of God." "What others," says Celsus, "would a man invite if he were sending out a proclamation for an assembly of robbers?" It was the same reproach that the Pharisees had brought against Jesus, namely, "He is a friend of sinners." In short, the Christians, for the most part, were true to the spirit and purpose of their Master, and, like Him, tried to "seek and to save the lost."

Questions and Topics.

1. "He felt that his hands were stained with blood—and now entirely despaired of salvation." Mention one thing that you would have said to Lucretius at this time, if you could have talked with him?

2. Why was John able to win him back to the Christian life?

3. Notice the argument of Celsus against the Christians (p. 7). How would Celsus have treated Lucretius if he had had the opportunity?

4. How would you answer the argument of Celsus?

5. What light does this lesson throw on the question of bad companions? Should we avoid them, or should we make friends with them and try to wield a good influence over them?

Notice first, how Lucretius was led into wrong-doing, and second, how a heathen mistress was led to become a Christian.

To Sum Up.

1. What was one of the chief aims of Jesus?

2. What Christian writer tells the story of the conversion of the robber captain?

3. About what period in history did Clement live? (See appendix.)

4. Who was partly to blame that the young man (Lucretius) fell into evil ways?

5. What kind of a young man was he, naturally?

6. How did it come about that he was finally won back to Christ?

7. What was one of the chief means whereby new converts were won to Christ, in the early days?

8. What did the heathen writer Celsus say against the Christians?

9. Who made a similar charge against Jesus?

LESSON 5.

A CHRISTIAN WIFE AND A HEATHEN HUSBAND.

§ 1. Customs in Which the Christians Could not Join.

Any one who tries to live a Christian life among non-Christian companions must come into almost daily conflict with their customs. This was especially true of the Christians in the Roman empire. The spirit of heathenism was everywhere. If a Christian went out on the street, he saw images of the gods standing there, and met processions in which these images were solemnly carried about. All who passed by paid their homage; the Christian could not do this. If he entered a courtroom there stood an altar with incense and wine. Custom required one in passing to strew incense and offer a libation, that is, pour out the wine as an offering. If he stepped into a tavern or store, or shop, to make a purchase, or leave an order, he always found an altar and idols, which he was expected to worship. Or perhaps he was invited by heathen friends or relatives to a family party. If he did not go, he gave offence; if he went, he still could not but displease them by refusing to take part in the sacrifices and libations. If a Christian wished to borrow money, he was expected to take an oath in the name of the heathen god. A Christian schoolmaster was expected to celebrate certain holidays in honor of the gods. Many a person found that he had to give up his former occupation entirely, in order to become a Christian; for example, laborers in heathen temples, idol-makers, sellers of incense. Many others must

have lost much money, simply because of the general dislike felt for them. Christian merchants must have lost many heathen customers. A Christian working man would find it hard to get a job. Tertullian gives us a vivid picture of the unpopularity which Christians had to face. " 'A good man,' says one, 'is Gaius Seius, only that he is a Christian.' So another, 'I am astonished that a wise man like Lucius should have suddenly become a Christian.' "

§ 2. A Wife who Became a Christian Against Her Husband's Wish.

The Christian had a particularly hard problem to face if the other members of his own family were not Christians. In such a case, the words of Jesus were literally fulfilled; "I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother—and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

In the writings of Justin Martyr there is a story of a certain married couple who lived in the city of Rome, about 150 A.D. The wife was a Christian and the husband a heathen. For convenience sake, let us name them Lucia, and Julian. At the time of their marriage, neither of them was a Christian. They had money, and their lives were selfish and intemperate. Later on, Lucia became acquainted with a Christian teacher named Ptolemaus, and through his influence was converted to Christianity. When, however, she tried to win her husband to her new Master, he only ridiculed and abused her.

§ 3. A Hard Fight Against Heathen Influences.

Henceforth her experiences became harder and harder to bear. From other Christian writers we know what she must have suffered. Every day, she was compelled to clash with her husband in regard to some matter of personal conduct or of household arrangements. He wished her to go with him as usual to the theatres. But there were no plays in those days, fit for a Christian to see. He wished her to go with him to heathen banquets, but these banquets were intemperate and licentious, and of course she could not attend them. She, on her

part, wished to go to the meetings of the Christians, especially the Sunday services; in fact, she tried to observe Sunday as the Lord's Day, a day of worship, and to some extent, a day of rest. Her husband, however, would do his best to keep her from the meetings. When she went out to visit the sick and the poor among her fellow Christians, he reviled her for entering the houses of "low-down freedmen and laborers." There was a family shrine in the dining room and at each meal, the husband would offer a portion of the food to the household god, but how could a Christian eat food which had been consecrated to an idol before her very eyes? Yet how could she avoid it, if she were not to starve? In their pathetic distress, many of the Christians found a way out of this difficulty by bringing home tiny portions of the bread from the Lord's Supper. They hoped that by eating this sacred bread, the rest of the food on the table would be cleansed from the pollution of idolatry. The heathen husband, however, would sooner or later notice his wife secretly eating her tiny crumb of special bread, and would suspect her of practising magic in order to invoke a curse on the family meal.

§ 4. What It Cost to be True to Christ.

Thus this man Julian grew more angry and abusive day by day, while Lucia grew more and more discouraged. She began to fear that with such a husband she could not continue much longer to live the Christian life. It occurred to her that she might leave him, but her friends urged her not to do this. "Perhaps even yet you can win him to Christ" they said. In the midst of her perplexity, however, the man went away for some weeks, on a business trip to Alexandria. During his absence, Lucia gathered up a few belongings and went away to the home of a Christian friend in another part of the city. When Julian returned and found that his wife had left him he was furious. He went immediately to a prefect, named Urbicus, and laid charges against her as being a Christian, and also against her teacher Ptolemaus. Lucia, apparently, had influence with the emperor, perhaps through aristocratic relatives, and the charges against her were not pressed, at least not at

that time. But Ptolemaus, and two others who were associated with him, were condemned and put to death as Christians. Thus we see that to a Christian of those early days, the heathen life around him was like some monstrous octopus, whose numerous tentacles or arms reached out to draw him back again to the old heathen sins. Very often the only escape was death. These people, however, were true followers of Him who said, "If thy right eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out," and "if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross."

Questions and Topics.

1. "At each meal, the husband would offer a portion of the food to the household god." In view of the fact that an "idol is nothing," was there any good reason why the Christian wife could not join in the meal?

2. In what other matters besides idolatry did the Christians come into conflict with heathen customs?

3. What sacrifices and dangers did Lucia encounter in leaving her husband?

4. Was it right for her to leave him?

5. Mention some modern custom in which a Christian should not join.

To Sum Up.

1. Mention six occasions in the course of the day when an early Christian would have had to make himself conspicuous by his peculiar conduct.

2. Tell the story of the woman whom we have called Lucia.

(*a*) What sort of a life had she and her husband lived before she became a Christian?

(*b*) How did her husband treat her after she became a Christian?

(*c*) Why did she not leave him at once?

(*d*) What was the result, when she finally did leave him?

LESSON 6.

HOW EVEN THE WEAK WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO DIE FOR CHRIST.

§ 1. Perpetua of Carthage, a Brave and Beautiful Christian Woman.

One of the most thrilling stories of early Christian heroism is that of the persecution which broke out in the year 202 A.D., in the city of Carthage. Among those who were arrested and thrown into the dungeon was a beautiful young woman named Vivia Perpetua. She was of aristocratic family and well educated. Her brother was also a Christian, and possibly other members of her family. Her father, however, was still a heathen in religion. At the time of her arrest she was twenty-two years of age. She was married and had a little baby boy. It is possible that her husband was a Christian and that he shared her fate.

§ 2. Thrown into a Dark Dungeon for the Sake of Christ.

In the account of this persecution (written by one of the members of the church at Carthage), there are several extracts from the diary which Perpetua herself kept after her arrest. She tells a pathetic story of her experiences; how frightened she was when the rough soldiers seized her; how she shuddered

when they thrust her down into the dark dungeon; and, worst of all, how she was torn with anxiety for her little baby, who had not yet been weaned, and who was now deprived of his mother. Two fellow Christians helped her, however, in her trouble. The "blessed deacons, Tertius and Pomponius," who had not yet been arrested, gave a fee to the jailor and the Christians in the dungeon were all brought up into " a pleasanter part of the prison." Here her mother came with the baby, and permission was granted that it might stay, for a time at least, with its mother in the prison.

§ 3. The Tears of an Aged Father.

Before the day of the trial, Perpetua's aged father came to see her many times and kept begging her to give up this new religion. The poor white-haired old man was almost crazed with grief and anxiety. Perpetua had been his darling. He thought of the times when, as a little girl, he had held her in his arms, and how she had grown to beautiful maidenhood and womanhood, and then he thought of the leopards and the other fierce beasts in the arena, among which she was to be thrown, and it nearly drove him mad. With haggard face and bloodshot eyes he knelt at her feet in the prison, and covered her hands with kisses. "Pity me, daughter," he begged, "pity your mother. Think of your little son, who is not yet weaned and will die if you are taken from him." Perpetua was "grieved over the gray hairs of her father," and tried to comfort him. But one thing she could not do, even for her father; she could not swerve from her loyalty to Christ.

§ 4. The Trial Before the Procurator.

A few days later, with the other Christian prisoners, she was taken to the town hall, to be tried before the procurator, Hilarianus. This officer was seated on a platform. Close by there was an image of the emperor, and beside it was an altar on which a fire was burning. On a stand was a box of incense powder. At the foot of the steps leading to the platform was Perpetua's father with his little grandson in his arms; and as his daughter mounted the steps, he begged her once more to

pity the little child, and sacrifice to the emperor. But she could only shake her head. When her turn came to be examined, the procurator said to her, "Just take a pinch of this incense here, and throw it into the flames in honor of Cæsar and I will set you free. What harm can there be in throwing a pinch of powder into the fire?" But Perpetua answered, "No, I cannot." In anger, the procurator gave orders that her father should be seized and beaten with rods before her eyes, as though to punish him for having so obstinate and wicked a

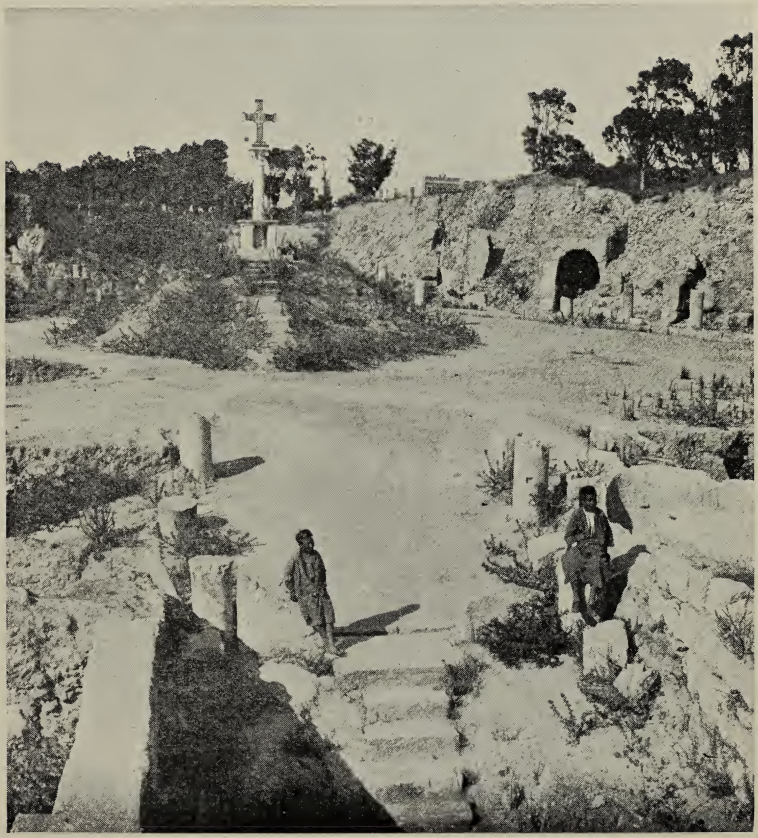
A Roman Hall of Justice.

Showing the raised platform on which the judge sat, with lictors carrying the fasces, the emblem of authority, on either side. These basilicas, which were the largest Roman halls of meeting, are said to have been copied by the early Christians for their churches, many of which are still called basilicas.

daughter. So Perpetua must needs look on in helpless agony, while her own father writhed beneath the lash, knowing all the time she had only to throw a little of that incense on the altar, in worship of Cæsar, and his sufferings would cease. But though her heart might break, she could not deny Christ. She remembered His words, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in Heaven."

§ 5. Butchered to Make a Roman Holiday.

So at last, sentence was pronounced. Perpetua and her companions were to be thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, on the birthday of the emperor's son, Geta Cæsar. Meanwhile they were taken back to the dungeon; nor was Perpetua's baby brought to her again. When the day came for



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THE ROMAN ARENA, CARTHAGE

Cross shows where Christian martyrs were thrown to wild beasts, 202 A. D

the execution, the prisoners were sent out one by one, or in small groups. Among the first was a young man named Saturus, a friend of Perpetua. A leopard was loosed upon him and blood streamed over his body, wounded by the savage teeth and claws. As he lay fainting on the sand, somebody in the crowd shouted, "washed and saved," referring to the belief of the Christians that their sins were washed away through the blood of Christ. The great assemblage of spectators caught up the mocking cry, and shouted in derision, "Washed and saved, washed and saved." Perpetua and a young slave girl named Felicitas were exposed to the attack of a fierce cow. They were tossed and trampled and badly hurt, but were not killed. So at last, with a little group of others who were still alive, they were brought out to be killed with a sword. When the young gladiator came to Perpetua, he hesitated. He was hardened to deeds of blood, but at the sight of her youth and beauty and innocence, his hand trembled. So Perpetua herself guided his wavering sword to her throat.

§ 6. "The Blood of the Christians is the Seed of the Church."

The Christian writer Tertullian was living in Carthage at this very time. He may have been thinking of Perpetua, when he wrote the last paragraph of his famous defence of Christianity: "Go zealously on, good rulers. You will stand higher with the people, if you shed the blood of Christians; crucify us, rack us, crush us, stamp us under foot. The more ingenious your cruelty, the more numerous we are. The more you mow us down, the faster we grow. The blood of Christians is the seed of the church."

Questions and Topics.

1. What do you think was the hardest part of the experience for Perpetua to endure?

2. What do you think was the effect of her heroic death on her fellow-Christians?

3. What was probably its effect on the non-Christians in Carthage?

4. How may we to-day confess Christ before men?

5. In what ways does it help the cause of Christ, to declare oneself His disciple?

To Sum Up.

1. In what city did Perpetua live?

2. In what year was she put to death?

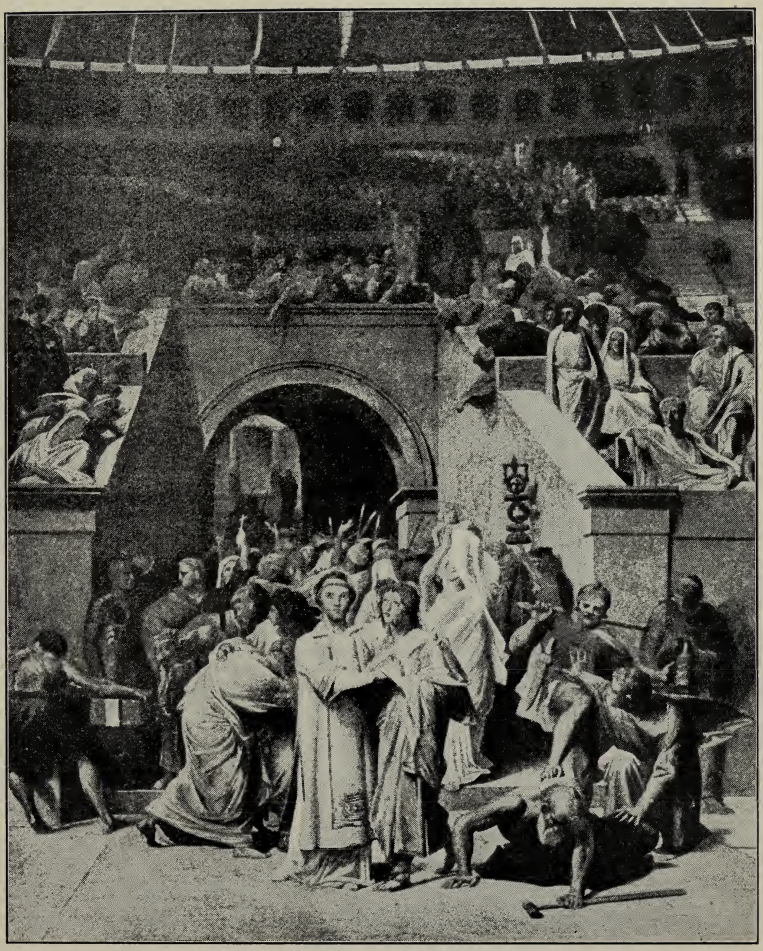
3. How old was she at the time?

4. What members of her family were Christians?

5. When she was brought before the Roman procurator, how might she have gained her freedom?

6. What efforts were made to influence her to renounce Christ?

7. Where and how was she put to death?



THE CHRISTIAN MARTYRS
From a painting by Frances Leon Benouville

LESSON 7.

CHRISTIAN LEADERS WHO WERE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

§ 1. The Special Perils Faced by Christian Leaders.

If it was dangerous to be a Christian in the Roman empire, how much more dangerous it must have been to be a Christian leader. In any time of persecution, the leaders, the prominent men, would be among the first victims. To realize how dangerous their position was, glance at the list of the Christian writers, on page 62. Notice how few of them escaped martyrdom. In this lesson we shall learn something regarding the lives of two of these leaders, namely, Polycarp and Justin.

§ 2. The Early Life of Polycarp.

Polycarp was a bishop in the church at Smyrna. Tradition says that when he was a boy, he was offered for sale in a slave market in Smyrna, and was purchased by a Christian woman, named Callisto, and brought up as her own son. At any rate, as he grew older, he won the love and respect of his fellow Christians in that city because of his enthusiasm and wisdom and became their leader.

§ 3. The Christians in Smyrna Persecuted.

He was an old man at the time of the outbreak against the Christians which cost his life. (This probably occurred in the year 155 A.D.) At first he yielded to the entreaties of his friends and took refuge in a farmhouse a few miles from Smyrna. The authorities arrested as many of the other Christians as they could find, and put to death eleven of them in the city arena, in the presence of a great crowd, after first torturing them in order to compel them to deny Christ. With only one exception, they all remained faithful to the last. Then the mob became exasperated: "Away with the atheists," they shouted. "Let Polycarp be sought out." They knew that Polycarp was the leader. So the soldiers found out where he was staying. As they were approaching the farmhouse he was warned, and took refuge in another house near by, so the soldiers seized a poor slave boy

and tortured him, until he confessed where the old man was hiding. Polycarp would flee no further, and as evening drew on, the soldiers found him and brought him back to the city. The next day, some of the leading officials of Smyrna came and begged him to yield. "What harm is there," they said to him, "in sacrificing to Lord Cæsar." But he only replied, "I shall not do as you advise me."

§ 4. The Death of Polycarp.

In the arena, also, the proconsul tried to persuade him to deny Christ. "We do not wish to slay an old man like you," he said, "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar, and say, 'Away with the Atheists.'" In reply, Polycarp turned and pointed to the mob, and said, "Away with the Atheists." Then the proconsul said once more, "Only swear, and reproach Christ, and I will set you free." Polycarp answered, "Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" When at last they saw that neither threats nor arguments would move him, they gathered a great pile of wood, and bound him to a stake in the center of it. The fire was kindled and blazed up, fanned by the wind. Owing to the direction of the wind, the flame arched itself above him, and did not immediately envelop him with the full fury of the heat. One of the soldiers, perhaps in pity, ended his sufferings with a sword thrust. Then the body was burned. Some of the bones were gathered up by the Christians as sacred relics, and the annual anniversary of his martyrdom was observed for many years by the Christians in Asia Minor.

§ 5. A Man who Defended His Fellow Christians.

In the early church there were not many persons who were sufficiently well educated to write books. So except through private conversations, the Christians could not defend themselves against the false and wicked slanders which were circulated about them. They greatly needed the help of men of special ability and learning, and, we may add, of special courage also. For if it was not safe to be even a humble unknown Christian, much less a bishop like Polycarp, how much courage

it must have required to publish books defending Christianity. One of the first of these brave men who wrote "apologies," that is defences of Christianity, was Justin, commonly known, from the manner of his death, as Justin Martyr.

§ 6. The Conversion and Writings of Justin.

He was born in the province of Samaria. In his youth, he went to Ephesus and studied with Greek teachers, in that city. During these student days, he formed the habit of going for walks in the country, along the seashore. Here one day he met a certain venerable man, who told him about the teachings of Jesus. Justin was deeply impressed. It seemed to him that Jesus was the Great Teacher, greater than Plato, or any of the other philosophers whom he had studied. So he became a Christian. In the course of his life he wrote many books explaining Christianity and defending it against false statements. For example, in reply to the charge that the Christians were atheists, he answered, of course, that they indeed refused to worship the false gods of the heathen, but that they did worship the true God, and were seeking to persuade all other men to worship Him. In reply to the dreadful slander that the Christians slew little babies and devoured them at their feasts, Justin retorted that it was rather the heathen Greeks and Romans who should be charged with such crimes as these. For it was a common practice among them to abandon new born children in the streets, either to perish, or to be picked up and raised as slaves. The Christians, however, taught that this practice was cruel and wicked. On the other hand, Justin told of the pure and holy teachings of Jesus, which the Christians tried to obey. He also pointed out that many of the Greek philosophers had taught doctrines very similar to the doctrines of the Christians. For example, they had ridiculed idolatry, saying that men ought not to worship the works of their hands, "for the workman is greater than his work." Justin explained in a very wise and beautiful way these similarities between the Christian teachings and those of the great writers of the Greeks. He said that the spirit of Christ had been in the hearts of men in every race, long before Jesus lived.

§ 7. The Death of Justin.

In the latter part of his life, Justin went to Rome. He was in that city, when the Christian teacher Ptolemaus was put to death, at the instigation of the heathen husband whose wife ("Lucia") had become a Christian. (See Lesson 5.) Justin published a book protesting fearlessly against this injustice, and addressed it to the emperor. "I too," he writes in this book, "expect to be plotted against and fixed to the stake by some of those whom I have mentioned." Very likely he was thinking of the heathen husband and his friends. At any rate he was brought before a prefect named Rusticus, with six other Christians whose teacher he had been, "in his room above a certain Martinus." As none of them would renounce Christ, they were scourged, and then led away and beheaded (165 A.D.).

Thus we see that the front rank of the Lord's army in those days was no place for cowards. These men were not cowards. In death, as in life, they were true leaders inspiring their followers to be loyal to the Master, "even unto death."

Questions and Topics.

1. What facts in the story of Polycarp show that he was a man of considerable influence among the heathen, as well as the Christians, in Smyrna?

2. What sentence shows the ruling motive in the life of Polycarp?

3. How was Justin well fitted by his early education to explain and defend Christianity?

4. Which of Justin's arguments probably had the greatest influence on heathen readers?

5. Why did not Polycarp flee entirely from Smyrna, and Justin from Rome, during periods of specially severe persecution?

To Sum Up.

1. In what city did Polycarp live?

2. Where did he hide when persecution broke out against the Christians?

3. What led the people to shout, "Let Polycarp be sought out"?

4. What efforts were made to persuade him to renounce Christ?

5. What was his answer to the proconsul?

6. How was he put to death?

7. Where was Justin born, and how and where was he educated, in his youth?

8. What arguments did he use in his books to defend Christianity?

9. What did he say to the Roman emperor regarding the persecution of the Christian woman "Lucia," and her teacher, Ptolemaus?

10. How was Justin put to death?

LESSON 8.

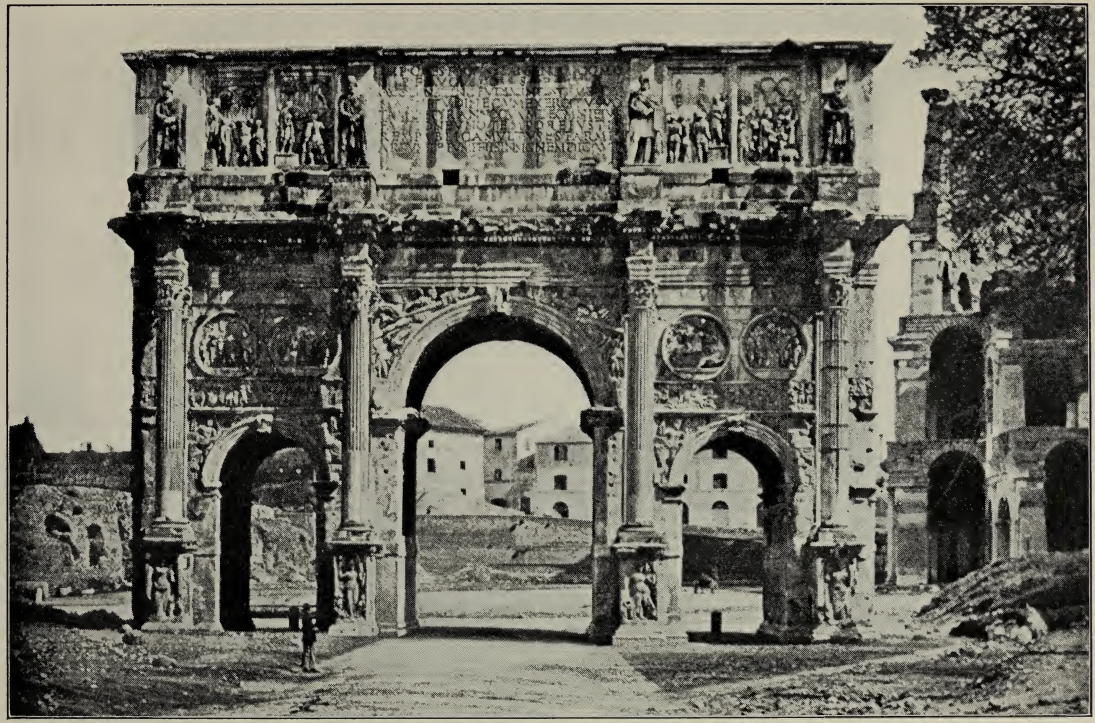
A ROMAN EMPEROR WHO BECAME A CHRISTIAN.

§ 1. The Last of the Persecutions.

The last and most terrible persecution which the Christians suffered at the hands of the Roman government was that under the Emperor Diocletian, beginning about 300 A.D., and lasting about ten years. (See Lesson 1.) Even while this persecution was going on, a young prince named Constantine was being secretly trained as a Christian by his Christian mother, Helena. Some two years after the persecution ceased Constantine was encamped with an army not far from the city of Rome. Across a river lay another army, with a rival prince, named Maxentius. The winner of the battle, which was to be fought the next day, would be the ruler of the Roman empire.

§ 2. Roman Legions Fighting Under a New Standard.

As Constantine slept in his tent that night he dreamed that he saw in the sky a shining cross, and above it, this motto: "*In hoc signo vinces.*" ("Through this sign, conquer.") The next morning he caused a banner to be prepared, called the Labarum, bearing the sign of the cross, and a monogram standing for the word Christ. With this banner he led his army to the battle and, winning the victory of Milvian Bridge, became the Roman Emperor. Shortly afterward he issued an edict permitting all persons to choose whatever religion they might



THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE, ROME

prefer. Later, he even published a general exhortation, urging all his subjects to become Christians. Thus the crucified Carpenter of Nazareth had conquered, outwardly at least, the great empire which had so mercilessly persecuted His followers.

§ 3. The Genuine Triumphs of the Man of Galilee.

Was this a real triumph over the hearts of men, or was it in part a mere matter of outward profession? In answer it should be said that Constantine himself was probably a sincere Christian. He may indeed have been influenced somewhat by the desire to get political advantages. Moreover, in personal character, he had many faults. But he certainly made many laws which really embodied the Christian spirit. Crucifixion as a punishment was abolished. Criminals were no longer branded on the forehead; the reason given for this law was that God had created the human countenance in His own image, and it was sinful to disfigure it. The abandonment of newborn babies was prohibited. Courts and government offices were closed on Sunday. The bloody gladiatorial combats, against which all the Christian leaders had protested, were indeed kept up, but Constantine decreed that criminals should no longer be put to death in this way. After about seventy-five years the Christian spirit triumphed over all kinds of gladiatorial combats. This came about as follows: A combat, between hired gladiators was being exhibited as usual, in the Coliseum at Rome, when an aged Christian named Telemachus leaped into the arena and separated the gladiators. The bloodthirsty mob of spectators, angry that their sport had been interrupted, rushed upon the old man and literally tore him to pieces. The brutal deed seemed to awaken the conscience of the people, and these combats were abolished. Thus we see that Christianity had indeed become a mighty force for good in the lives of men. The world had actually been lifted somewhat nearer the Christian standard.

§ 4. The Temptations of Prosperity.

On the other hand, the conversion of Constantine brought the Christians a new temptation. They had endured persecu-

tion with heroic faithfulness; could they stand the test of prosperity? The temptation was all the more severe, because Constantine gave much money and land to the church, and his example was followed by his successors, who hoped in this way to buy the moral support of the Christian bishops. It was natural, under such conditions, that many persons should profess themselves Christians, just because it was easy and popular. Great numbers thronged into the church for wholly selfish reasons, and lived thoroughly evil lives. Moreover, even the best of the Christians failed in many ways to understand the real spirit of Christianity.

§ 5. The Mistake of the Monks.

One of the worst mistakes was the idea that Christians should if possible get away from the evils of the world and live in monasteries. Jesus, we are sure, would have told them to go back into the midst of the world with all its evils, and try to cure them. In the century following Constantine, however, hundreds of monasteries and convents were built, and great numbers of the noblest Christians in the churches renounced the comforts and joys of home life and became monks or nuns. They spent their lives in hardship and self-denial. They slept on stone beds; tortured themselves with hair shirts; and lacerated their backs with scourges; some lived in lonely caves on the sides of steep cliffs; all in the mistaken belief that by such means the soul could be purified. We cannot but admire their courage, but after all, their religion was partly selfish. Instead of seeking first of all the kingdom of God, in order that God's will might be done on earth as it is in heaven, each one of them was seeking to gain for his own soul the joys of a future life. Intent on this narrow purpose, it is not surprising that they were careless of the needs of the world outside of their monasteries.

§ 6. Men who Rebuked Worldliness.

There were indeed certain men who protested against the tendency towards worldliness in the church and against the evils which they saw around them. Such a man was John Chry-

sostom, the great preacher of Constantinople, of whom some day you will read. Such a man was the Christian writer Salvian. "Some one may urge," says Salvian, "that the times are quite changed, and that it is not expected now that we should undergo for Christ's sake what the apostles suffered. That is very true. For the governors are not now pagans, nor persecuting tyrants; the blood of the saints is not now poured out, nor is our faith tried by torture. Therefore," he adds, "since princes are now become Christians, and there is no such thing as persecution, and religion is not disturbed, we who are not compelled to bear more severe trials, ought at least to please God by all manner of lesser duties. And he who readily discharges these lesser duties would probably perform the greater also, if he should be called upon." It was chiefly through such men as these that the true Christian spirit was kept alive in the midst of the temptations and trials and perplexities of that trying age. In the remaining lessons of this course, we shall see what problems they had to face, and with what success they solved them.

Questions and Topics.

1. Resolved: That Constantine was a sincere Christian. Choose the affirmative or the negative side of this question, and briefly state your reasons.

2. What statement in section 4 helps to explain the sudden increase in the number of monks and nuns, described in section 5?

3. What is the good element in the life of a monk or a nun?

4. Mention some opportunities for self-denial which come to us to-day.

5. What sentence in section 6 applies with special force to our lives to-day?

To Sum Up.

1. About how much time elapsed between the beginning of the persecution of Diocletian, and the Edict of Toleration, issued by Constantine?

2. Describe the dream or vision which led to Constantine's conversion.

3. Mention some laws enacted by Constantine which showed the influence of Christianity.

4. Tell how gladiatorial combats were abolished.

5. What new temptations did the reign of Constantine bring to the Christians?

6. What mistaken idea of Christianity did many sincere Christians have?

7. Mention two men who protested against worldliness in the church.

LESSON 9.

A GREAT EMPIRE CONQUERED BY BARBARIANS.

§ 1. Keeping Back the Floods.

During all the centuries of which we have been studying, the shadow of a great fear hung over the Roman empire. Beyond its frontiers, but pressing against it on all sides, as the sea presses against the dykes in Holland, were the barbarians. Especially dreaded were the Germans and the Goths. These tribes were then at about the same stage of civilization as the American Indians when America was discovered. They lived in rude huts, wore garments of skins, and obtained their food chiefly by hunting and fishing. They were never conquered by the Romans, although they were driven back again and again to their homes in the forests of the north.

§ 2. Will Christianity Save the Empire?

As time went on, however, and especially in the century following Constantine (from 300 to 400 A.D.), it seemed more and more difficult to repulse them. Bands of Franks and Goths kept breaking past the military forts along the Rhine and the Danube, to plunder the rich cities beyond. This was the very century when Christianity became the official religion of the empire. One might naturally suppose that through the influence of Christianity, the nation would be stronger, and better able to solve its problems. The actual course of events, however, is well illustrated by the following incident, the main facts of which are told by Salvian:

§ 3. A Poor Immigrant, and His Rich Roman Neighbor.

About 425 A.D., there lived in the province of Gaul, near the city of Marseilles, a certain poor farmer whom we will call Ursus. His father had come down from Germany, and had adopted the customs of the Romans. The farm was a small one; nevertheless, for a long time Ursus had managed to support himself. As the years passed, however, he found himself poorer and poorer. The governor of the province lived in a palace, and wasted much money in extravagant luxuries, while poor farmers like Ursus were forced to pay very high taxes.

Finally, one year, Ursus' wife fell sick. In order to secure money to pay for medicine, Ursus went to a rich neighbor of his, whom we will call Demas. "Lend me a little money," he said, "and you will save my wife." Now Ursus and Demas were both members of a Christian church in Marseilles. As Demas gave liberally to the church, and was highly spoken of as a devout man, Ursus naturally hoped that he would treat him kindly, as a brother Christian, as well as a neighbor. "Certainly" said Demas, "I will lend you money. Only sign this agreement and I will let you have what you need." When Ursus read the agreement, he found that it would require him to pay a very high rate of interest every month, or else forfeit his little farm. It was a hard bargain; nevertheless, the poor man was in desperate need of the money. He loved his wife dearly, and his heart was heavy. So at last he signed the paper.

§ 4. Driven from Home

Six months later, the day came which Demas had been waiting for. Ursus had no money to pay the interest, and he received notice to move out of his home, with his wife and babies, and all their possessions. Where could they go? What could they do? In his distress, Ursus thought of the pastor of his church who was none other than Salvian. Going to the pastor's house, Ursus begged for help. "Will you not go to Demas," he said when he had told him the circumstances, "and intercede for me?" "Indeed I will," replied Salvian, for he was a just man and a true Christian.

§ 5. A Champion of Justice Repulsed.

At the earliest possible moment, therefore, Salvian went to the fine house where Demas lived. "Why do you devour this poor man's possessions?" he demanded. "Have you no mercy? Do you not know that he has nothing else wherewith to keep himself and his little ones from starving? I pray you do not rob him of his home." In spite of Salvian's rebuke, however, Demas did not seem in the least ashamed of himself. On the contrary, he glared at the pastor, as though he had presumed to ask a favor. "Do you mean that barbarian Ursus?" Demas

said. "Well, I cannot grant your request." "Why not?" asked Salvian. "Those barbarians are ruining the country," replied Demas; "and I have sworn by Christ, to take away from this man everything which he possesses. Pray, is it lawful for me to leave undone, what I have sworn by that Holy Name to do?" When Salvian heard this astonishing piece of hypocrisy and impudence, he was speechless with anger. Turning on his heel, he walked away without a word. "What could I say," he asks in his story of the incident, "having heard the reason of so religious a piece of villainy?" Sad at heart, he could only go to Ursus and confess that he had failed. The little family was driven out from their home to beg or starve.

§ 6. A Harvest of Disaster.

The next year a horseman came riding posthaste into Marseilles. "The Goths are coming" he cried. "They have crossed the Alps, and a large band of them is marching towards this city." At this news, the governor and his rich nobles bestirred themselves. "We must gather an army," they said; and Demas was appointed among others to organize a company of soldiers. Demas thought of Ursus. That fellow would make a good soldier. No doubt he would know of others. But where was Ursus? Where did he live, since that little trouble about the farm? Alas, Ursus was nowhere to be found. Afterwards, it was discovered that *he had gone over to the Goths.* In fact, a great many native Romans who, like Ursus, had been unjustly treated, had followed his example. When the Goths came, they burned Marseilles to the ground, after helping themselves to whatever they wanted, in the houses of Demas and his friends. A part of the invaders moved on to burn and plunder elsewhere. Others settled down in the neighborhood, and made it their permanent home. For centuries, however, the city lay for the most part in ruins. Of all its buildings, only the church had been spared. The people lived in huts and hovels.

§ 7. The Beginning of the Dark Ages.

Such events as these were taking place all over the empire. The old Roman civilization was being destroyed. Christianity

had failed to cure it of corruption and injustice. The centuries from this period until about 1000 A.D., are known in history as the Dark Ages. Imagine New York and London and Chicago lying for the most part in ruins; the grass growing on the railroad tracks; the government destroyed; the doors of the schoolhouses closed; not one person in a thousand ever learning to read and write; no protection for property, and no man's life ever safe; thus we may, perhaps, understand what befell the world when the old Roman civilization was broken up, and the Dark Ages set in. Had there been more Christian leaders like Salvian, this might never have happened. The strength of the nation would not have been weakened by injustice toward the poor. But alas too many of the Christians were like Demas. Others, as we have seen, were shut away in monasteries trying to save their own souls instead of trying to help their country. Nevertheless, loyalty to Christ had by no means died out altogether. We shall see in a later lesson that although the Roman empire passed away, Christianity lived on. In fact, the Christian church was in a measure purified by the disasters and trials which she encountered during these Dark Ages.

Questions and Topics.

1. "In his distress, Ursus thought of Salvian the pastor of the church." What had Salvian probably done on previous occasions, to win the friendship and confidence of Ursus?

2. "Those barbarians are ruining the country." Of the characters in this story, what ones were really doing most to ruin the Roman empire?

3. Suppose Salvian had succeeded in his errand to Demas; suppose Ursus had not been driven from his home; suppose justice had ruled among all the people of Marseilles: what different outcome might there have been when the Goths came?

4. How do you think Demas would have answered the questions, "What does religion consist in? What must a religious man do?"

5. How would Salvian have answered this question?

To Sum Up.

1. What great fear overshadowed the Roman empire in the latter part of its history?

2. Mention some of the barbarian tribes who invaded the empire.

3. What kind of people were they? How were they accustomed to live?

4. What injustice was inflicted on the poor immigrant Ursus, by his rich neighbor Demas?

5. Who protested against this injustice?

6. What was the excuse of Demas to Salvian.

7. What was the result of this act of injustice, and others like it, when the savage Goths invaded Marseilles?

8. What is meant by the Dark Ages?

9. What caused the decay and ruin of the old Roman civilization?

10. Why did not Christianity prevent this decay?

LESSON 10.

A CHRISTIAN MOTHER AND HER GREAT SON. MONICA AND AUGUSTINE.

§ 1. The Christian Home.

One of the greatest blessings which Christ gave to the world was a new reverence for womanhood and a nobler ideal of home life. The homes of the early Christians were happy homes, and in the new atmosphere of Christianity there were many women who distinguished themselves for their character and ability, and who rose to positions of influence. "Behold," exclaimed a heathen writer, "what women these Christians have!" These ideals were kept alive all through the Middle Ages, and are among the chief glories of our modern civilization. As an illustration of what Christianity meant for womanhood, and for the home, let us turn to the story of Monica and her son Augustine.

§ 2. A Boy who Loved His Mother.

Augustine was born in the village of Tagaste, in North Africa, some twenty years after the death of Constantine (354 A.D.). His father, Patricius, was not a Christian. Nevertheless, he sacrificed his personal comforts to send his son away to school,

and thus showed himself a good father. Moreover, he became a Christian not long before his death. It was the Christian mother, Monica, however, who wielded the greatest influence in the boy's life. Her character was strong and beautiful. Augustine tells of her kindness to the poor, and to all in distress. He tells how on a certain stormy sea voyage, she was the sunshine of the entire ship's company, both passengers and crew. Her whole life was like sunshine in dark places.

§ 3. A Boy in Bad Company.

As a boy, Augustine was like other boys. He was fond of ball-playing, in fact he sometimes "played hookey" from school, in order to play ball. Yet he was fond of books too, and shed tears over the sorrows of Dido, the heroine of Virgil's great story, "The Æneid." As he grew older, he fell in with a gang of boys of his own age; and they led each other into many pranks which would better have been left undone. One night for example, they robbed a neighbor's pear tree which was loaded with fine pears. Augustine tells us that he could have had even better pears at home; but the other boys kept saying "Let's go and do it," and he was ashamed not to join them. One thing led to another, of course, and the boys gradually fell into worse practices. People called them "wild." Monica indeed, talked to her son about the temptations which boys encounter, and warned him against these wild ways. Augustine loved his mother. Indeed she afterwards testified that she "had never heard a harsh or reproachful word come out of his mouth against her." Nevertheless, at this time, he thought his mother's words were only "womanish counsels," and so kept on in his wilful headstrong life.

§ 4. An Ambitious but Selfish Young Man.

When he was about nineteen years old, his father, at a financial sacrifice, as we have said, sent him to the city of Carthage to study. Here at first, he continued in much the same kind of life as at home. He was very fond of fine clothes and gay times. Nowadays we should have called him "a sport." In the course of his studies, however, he came upon a great book by the Latin philosopher Cicero, on the search after

truth. He was deeply impressed and resolved to spend less time in frivolous follies. Only one thing troubled him. "The name of Christ" was not in this book of Cicero. With all his wilfulness, he had not forgotten what he had learned about Jesus, as a child on his mother's knee. "The name of my Saviour, my tender heart had drunk in even with my mother's milk. And whatever was without that name, however learned, polished or truthful, took not complete hold of me." From this time on, however, he began to study with more purpose, and shortly afterwards returned to Tagaste to be a teacher of rhetoric. He was very successful, not only in his home town, but also in Carthage, whither he went some years later, and finally in Rome itself. His life during this period was not a happy one, however. He had to do many things, as a teacher of rhetoric, of which his conscience did not approve. Pupils came to him to learn tricks of speech with which to gain unjust decisions in court. As a rhetorician he was once called upon to deliver an address praising the emperor, who was a bad man. In this speech, says he, "I was to speak many a lie, and lying, was to be applauded by those who knew I lied." Such tasks as these were distasteful to him. In other ways also, his life was still evil. When he went to Rome, his mother begged him to take her with him, as her husband Patricius was now dead, and she was lonely. She went with him, indeed, as far as the sea; but by a trick, he took ship alone, leaving her weeping on the shore. "I had lied to my mother," he writes, "and such a mother." Later on, however, she came to live with him in Italy.

§ 5. An Inward Struggle: Shall I Become a Christian?

When he was about thirty-three years old, he came to the supreme crisis and turning-point in his life. A better position as a teacher was offered him in the city of Milan, in Northern Italy; and he went there with his mother. He had received letters to the bishop of the church in that city, whose name was Ambrose, a good man and a true minister of Christ. Augustine found him exceedingly warm hearted and friendly, and liked him so much that he went to hear him preach. After that he

THE CATHEDRAL, MILAN

In this city Augustine was converted

went to church every Sunday and his heart was deeply touched. His mother Monica, and the good preacher Ambrose, became great friends, and their united influence over the young man grew stronger and stronger. He grew more and more discontented with the life he was living, and conscience told him to become a Christian. But there were certain pleasures which he was then enjoying which he felt to be sinful; softly they whispered to him, "Canst thou part with us?" Could he give them up? Like many a young man at such a time, he kept postponing his decision. "Presently, lo presently," he would say to the voice of God in his heart. "Leave me a little while." "But my 'presently, presently' had no present, and my 'leave me a little while' went on for a long while." One day when his distress was at its worst, he went out into the garden, back of his house, with a friend named Alypius, and a little later he left Alypius and went on further into the garden, and flung himself down, weeping, under a fig tree. "How long, how long?" he cried. "To-morrow, and to-morrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour, an end to my uncleanness?"

§ 6. Augustine's Conversion.

"I was saying these things," he writes, "and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, coming from a neighboring house, chanting and oft repeating, 'Take and read, take and read.' Immediately I ceased to weep, and I began to ask myself most earnestly whether it were usual for children in any kind of game to sing such words, nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So I rose up, interpreting it in no other way than as a command to me from heaven to open the book [that is, the Bible] and to read the first chapter I should light upon. So I returned quickly to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I put down the volume of the Apostles. I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell,—'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' No further would I read, nor did I need;

for instantly, as the sentence ended, by a light as it were of security infused into my heart,—all the gloom of doubt vanished away." Thus Augustine became a Christian in that garden.

Almost his first act after his conversion was to go into the house and tell his mother. Her joy we can well imagine. All these years she had been praying for her son, with many tears. She had "believed in Christ that before she departed this life she would see him a believer." And now her prayers were answered, and her faith rewarded. The story of Augustine's latter life may be found in other books. He became one of the greatest leaders in Christian history, and one of the world's greatest thinkers. It should never be forgotten, however, that there could have been no Saint Augustine, as he is known in history, had it not been for the loving, faithful, tender, influence of the Christian mother, Monica.

Questions and Topics.

1. If Augustine had refused to join the other boys in robbing the pear tree, what would they probably have said?

2. Where did he get the idea that his mother's words were only "womanish counsels"?

3. Suppose Augustine's father had been a Christian as well as his mother, in what way might his life have been different?

4. Why did not Augustine wish to have his mother live with him in Rome?

5. Is it probable that Augustine was sometimes influenced by his mother when he did not realize it? When, for example?

6. How does this story of Augustine's early life show the providential care of God?

To Sum Up.

1. Where and when was Augustine born?

2. Tell what you can about his father.

3. What kind of a woman was Monica, his mother?

4. By what forces for evil was Augustine influenced in his boyhood and youth?

5. By what good influences was he helped?

6. Tell the story of his conversion, in the garden?

LESSON 11.

HOW OUR EUROPEAN ANCESTORS WERE CONVERTED TO CHRIST.

When the barbarians invaded the Roman empire, the leaders of the Christian churches were aroused to the fact that they had a duty to perform. These northern tribes were worshipers of Woden and Thor, and the other deities of Norse mythology. To them, the ideal life was one of fighting and carousing; and they dreamed of a future Valhalla, after death, where those who fought bravely in this life might conquer their enemies, and drink strong liquor, forever and ever. These idolaters had to be converted to Christ, or Christianity would perish. The period of the Dark Ages, therefore, with all its darkness, was a time of splendid Christian missionary activity. Unfortunately, few records of this missionary work were kept. Some interesting facts, however, have been handed down to us in the old annals.

§ 2. The Bible Translated into Gothic.

The Goths, who came down into Italy, Southern France and Spain, were converted to Christianity before they left their former home in Eastern Europe. This was accomplished in part through the efforts of a missionary named Wulfila, or Ulfilas (Little Wolf). He invented an alphabet for the Gothic language, and translated the Bible into it. In this translation, he omitted the stories in the Book of Kings, about the bloody wars of the Hebrews, lest they should stir up the warlike passions of the Goths. Who knows how much more cruel and murderous they might have been, as they forced their way down into their new homes in Southern and Western Europe, had it not been for the teachings of this brave apostle of the Prince of Peace.

§ 3. Heathen Angleland Becoming Christian England.

Britain had been partially Christianized while under the rule of the Romans. Later, however, while the Goths and Franks were invading the rest of the empire, the Angles and Saxons came swarming into the British Isles and brought heathenism

with them. These newcomers learned of Christianity, as the result of the following incident. Shortly before the year 590 A.D. a monk named Gregory was passing a slave-market in Rome, where he saw three fair-haired, handsome boys. "Who are these, and where did they come from?" he asked. "They are Angles," was the answer. "Indeed," said Gregory, "they look like angels." Some years later, when he became a bishop of the Roman church, or the Pope, he sent a band of missionaries to Angleland, or England. The leader of the band was a certain Augustine (not the Augustine of whom we learned in Lesson 10).

§ 4. St. Patrick in Ireland.

Christianity was carried to Ireland by Patricius or Patrick, whose ancestors had been Christians since the days when the Romans were in Britain. As a boy he was taken captive from Scotland, and sold as a slave in Ireland. For six years he fed cattle for his master. Amidst the hardships of his life, he found comfort in the teachings of Christ, which he remembered from his childhood in a Christian home. Later in life, having escaped from slavery, he felt himself called of God to go back to Ireland, and tell the heathen tribes there about the Gospel. He was very successful as a missionary. One of his disciples, St. Columba, carried the Gospel to Scotland. In fact, Ireland became a center of missionary work; bands of zealous Irish missionaries went to many parts of Europe.

§ 5. A French Chieftain who Wanted to Avenge the Death of Jesus.

Christianity became the tribal religion of the Franks (or the French) through the conversion of their king Clovis. He had married a Christian princess named Chlotilda, who came from a tribe further south, and through her had learned something of the Christian religion. Just before a battle with a hostile tribe, he prayed to Jesus Christ for aid, and promised, if his prayers were answered, to be baptized as a Christian. It happened that he did indeed win the victory, and on the following Christmas Day he was baptized with three thousand of his warriors. It is plain enough that such a wholesale conversion as

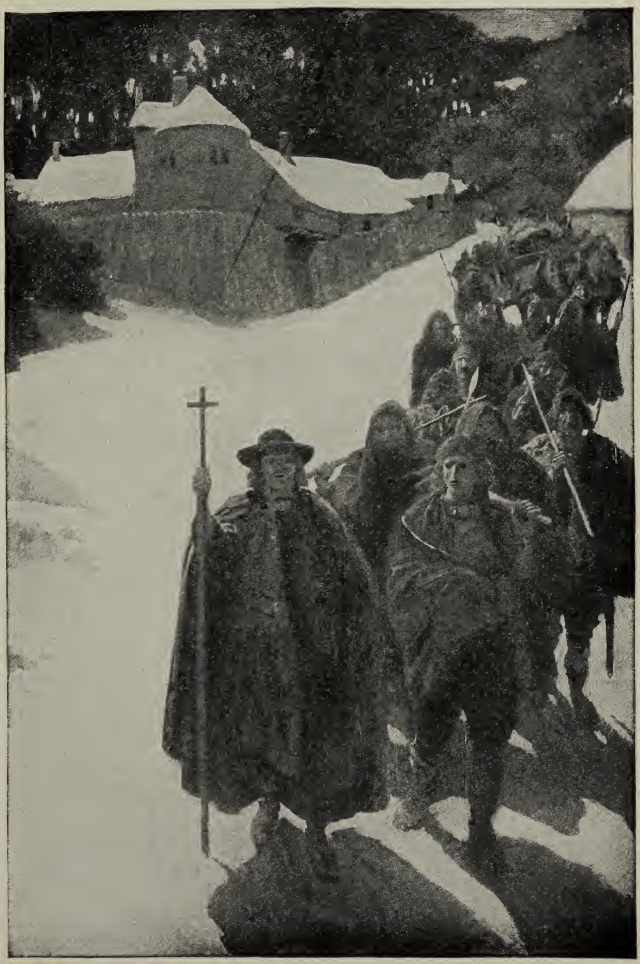
this was chiefly a matter of outward profession, rather than of inward purpose. Yet these people had begun to learn something of the meaning of Christianity. It is said that when King Clovis first heard the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, he was deeply stirred. "Would that I had been there with my Franks," he said, "to avenge Him."

§ 6. Cutting Down the Oak Tree of Thor.

The chief missionary to the Germans was an English monk named Winfred, better known as St. Boniface, who established monasteries in many parts of Germany. In the course of his travels he found a certain great oak tree which was sacred to the Thunder-God, Thor. Winfred saw an opportunity to strike a death blow against the old northern heathenism. Having gathered a great assembly around this oak tree, he appeared on the scene with an axe, and with his own hand felled it to the ground. When the people saw that Thor was unable to defend his tree, they abandoned the old worship, and accepted Christianity. After a long life of active missionary work, Winfred was beheaded by the Frisians, a tribe which at that time was hostile to Christianity.

§ 7. How Winfred Preached to the Germans.

Some of Winfred's missionary sermons have been preserved, and the following extracts show how practical they were: "These are the commandments which you shall keep and fulfil: to love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourselves. Be patient, have mercy, be kind, chaste, pure. Teach your sons to fear God, teach your whole family to do so. Make peace wherever you go, and let him who sits in court give a just verdict, and take no presents, for presents make even a wise man blind. Keep the Sabbath and go to church to pray, but not to prattle. Give alms according to your power, for alms extinguish sins, as water does fire. Show hospitality to travelers, visit the sick, take care of widows and orphans, pay your tithes to the church and do to nobody what you would not have done to yourself. Cling to the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, and teach them to



WINFRED AND HIS FOLLOWERS ON A MISSION TOUR

your children. Keep the fast, love what is right, stand up against the devil, and partake from time to time of the Lord's Supper. Such are the works which God commands you to do and fulfil."

§ 8. Building a New Christian Civilization.

Beside these missionaries named above, there were of course hundreds of others, who carried the teachings of the Gospel to all parts of Europe; wherever they went they cut down trees and built monasteries. Each monastery became a kind of Christian school. Here the people in the neighborhood were taught to till the soil and build houses. Here the weak could flee for refuge from the murderer and the oppressor. Here law and order prevailed, and men gained some notion of the blessings of government. Schools, also, were established, and in each generation, at least a few learned to read and write. Libraries were collected, and copies of the Bible and other ancient writings were preserved—a service for which we in our day can never be too grateful. In short, although the Christian church was unable to preserve the old Roman civilization from corruption, it was itself awakened to a new life by the shock of the barbarian invasions; and the religion of Jesus became one of the chief forces which helped to build a new and grander civilization.

Questions and Topics.

1. Which of the missionaries mentioned in this lesson was perhaps the one who converted your own ancestors to Christ?

2. How did these missionaries show their courage and faith?

3. What other reasons besides love for Christ may have influenced some persons among these northern tribes to call themselves Christians?

4. On the other hand, what facts show that the missionaries exerted a genuine Christian influence upon the moral character of many?

5. How did Ulfilas help the Roman empire as well as the Goths?

6. How do foreign missions help our own country, to-day?

To Sum Up.

1. Describe the religion of the northern barbarians who conquered Rome.

2. How was the church compelled to send missionaries to them?

3. What missionaries are mentioned in this lesson?

4. In what country did each of them work?

5. Mention one or two of the precepts of Winfred, as quoted in the extract from his missionary sermons.

6. What is meant by the sentence, "Each monastery became a kind of Christian school"?

LESSON 12.

THE CHRISTIAN CONQUEST OF EUROPE.

Review.

Christianity began as the religion of a little band of disciples of Jesus, in an upper room in Jerusalem. As Jews, they belonged to a despised race. They were despised and hated even by the leaders of their own race. The Master whom they worshiped had been a carpenter, and carpenters were looked down upon, in those days, as peasants. Worse still, He had been crucified between two thieves,—executed as a criminal.

To-day, Christianity is the leading religion of the leading nations of the world. In every city, in every civilized land, Christ is worshiped in great and beautiful churches. Although many un-Christian acts are performed every day, nevertheless, outwardly at least, the name of Christ is everywhere revered; and there are multitudes who sincerely try to be His disciples.

How has this come about? We have answered this question in the lessons of this course. We have seen that this great victory has been won at the cost of blood and torture and death, on the part of countless humble Christian men and women. Yet we should not close our study with a sense of pity for those early Christians. They were perhaps the happiest people who have ever lived. They were so completely enraptured by the glory of the cause which they served, that they seem scarcely to have felt the pain and suffering which their persecutors sought to inflict. It was this spirit of enthusiasm which conquered the Roman empire, and the continent of Europe, for the Christian religion. This same spirit, in our hearts, will help each one of us to be a conquering influence for the Christian life. Surely if the Christians could sing for joy, amidst the tortures of the arena, that same power of Christ can make us triumphant over the petty trials and temptations which come to us day by day.

"When brambles vex me sore, and anguish me,
Then I remember those pale martyr feet,
That trod on burning shares, and drank the heat,
As it had been God's dew, with ecstasy."

Questions and Topics.

1. Into what three periods may we divide the history which we have been studying in this course?

2. In which of these periods were the Christians most Christ-like? Explain why?.

3. How do you explain the fact that in about two and a half centuries, a despised religion of a crucified carpenter became the leading religion of the Roman empire?

4. How do you explain the fact that when the barbarians conquered Rome, they themselves and all the northern lands from which they came, were conquered by Christianity?

5. From Jerusalem to Damascus; from Damascus to Antioch; from Antioch, all over the Roman empire; from the Roman empire all over Europe; from Europe to America—how long and how far will this triumphal march of Christianity continue?

Final "Sum Up."

1. Mention three reasons why the Christians were persecuted in the Roman empire?

2. When did the Roman government first attack Christianity?

3. What was Tragan's rule regarding the Christians?

4. Under what emperor were the Christians persecuted most severely?

5. How did the early Christians show the spirit of brotherly love?

6. Where did they hold their meetings for worship?

7. What did they do at these meetings?

8. How did they win converts to Christ?

9. To whom did they offer the blessings of the Gospel? Was the Gospel merely for those who were already righteous?

10. What story is told of a robber chieftain near the city of Smyrna?

11. By what temptations were the Christians constantly surrounded?

12. How and when and in what city was Perpetua put to death?

13. By what act could she have gained her freedom?

14. Tell what you can about the death of Polycarp? of Justin?

15. With what arguments did Justin, in his writings, defend his fellow Christians, and the Christian religion?

16. Tell the story of the conversion of Constantine? Was it sincere?

17. When did this occur?

18. Why was Rome so easily conquered by the barbarians?

19. Why did not the Christian religion preserve the old Roman civilization from destruction?

20. What kind of a man was Salvian?

21. Tell the story of Salvian and the poor farmer whom we called Ursus.

22. Where and when was Augustine born?

23. What person wielded the strongest influence over his life?

24. Tell what you know regarding his boyhood and early education.

25. What profession did he choose?

26. Mention three other influences, beside Monica's, that led to his conversion.

27. Tell the story of his experience in the garden in Milan.

28. Mention the names of early missionaries to the following countries: England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany?

29. What is a monastery? How did missionary monasteries build up European civilization?

30. What is the error in the monastic idea of religion?

APPENDIX

List of Church Fathers Mentioned in these Lessons.

Ignatius was a bishop of the church in Antioch. He was taken to Rome and put to death as a Christian about 117 A.D.

Polycarp was a bishop in the church at Smyrna, when Ignatius was put to death. He himself was put to death as a Christian, about 155 A.D.

Justin Martyr was a younger contemporary of Polycarp. He lived in Ephesus and Rome. He was beheaded about 166 A.D.

Tertullian was a Roman lawyer, in the city of Carthage in North Africa. He became a Christian about 190 A.D., when he was about thirty or forty years old. He was not called upon to die for his religion, but died in old age, about 220 A.D.

Clement of Alexandria was the president of a Christian school in that city, where catechumens, that is, persons who wanted to learn about Christianity, were instructed in its doctrines. He lived about the same time as Tertullian.

Origen was a pupil of Clement in his school at Alexandria, and later took Clement's place as president of the school. He was a man of remarkable learning and genius. About 250 A.D., he was cruelly tortured by the Roman authorities and condemned to be burned as a Christian. Although this sentence was not carried out, he died shortly afterwards, as the result of his injuries.

Augustine was born in 354 A.D., and died in 430 A.D. Like Tertullian he spent most of his life in North Africa, not far from Carthage.

Salvian was born in Gaul about 400 A.D. He became a priest in the city of Marseilles.

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